

Case File No.: AA-79861
EA No.: AK-040-99-038

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

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Type of
Action: Mining Claim Occupancy

Location: T. 26 N., R. 12 W., Sections 15 and 16, SM

Applicant: Charlotte Bradley
1807 E. Diamond
Anchorage, AK 99507
and
Joe Bradley
529 Lynn Wood
Anchorage, AK 99518

Prepared
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Preparing
Office: Bureau of Land Management
Anchorage Field Office
6881 Abbott Loop Road
Anchorage, Alaska 99507

Date: August 19, 1999

I. INTRODUCTION

On August 14, 1998, the Anchorage Field Office received an Alaska Placer Mining Application from Joe Bradley. Residential occupancy is listed as a necessary component of his mining operation. On October 10, 1996, Mr. Bradley filed with this office a notification of an existing occupancy on a Federal mining claim. Additionally, on June 10, 1998, an occupancy work sheet was submitted to BLM.

The Bradley family holds numerous unpatented Federal mining claims at Collinsville and adjoining drainages. The property is remote and has no road access.

The Bradley family has been conducting small scale placer mining exploration operations around Collinsville most summers since the mid-1980's. This is a continuation of mining that has occurred since the 1920's. The mining operation uses a D8 bulldozer, front-end-loader, dragline, pumps and a large mobile grizzly/wash plant. They have filed a 3809 mining notice through the State of Alaska Placer Mining Application process most years since 1985.

A. Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action:

The Bradley family has requested an occupancy authorization for continuing use and occupancy in order to conduct ongoing gold placer mining activities on nearby Federal mining claims.

B. Conformance With the Land Use Plan:

The proposed mining claim occupancy is within lands included in the Southcentral Planning Area Management Framework Plan (MFP), signed March 1980. One of the plan objectives (objective M-1), states that the Bureau provide opportunities for the development of identified economic reserves of locatable minerals throughout the planning area. The Proposed Action is in conformance with this land use plan objective.

C. Relationship to Statutes, Regulations, Policies, Plans or Other Environmental Analyses:

The regulations for authorizing occupancies on Federal mining claims are established in 43 CFR 3715. As established by regulation, the NEPA analysis for mining claim occupancy authorization is considered separately from the 3809 Surface Management Regulations which considers mining impacts.

II. PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

A. Proposed Action:

The Proposed Action is to continue the mining claim use and occupancy of existing structures for the Bradley family, in order for them to conduct placer mining activities on their Federal mining claims. The occupancy site consists of approximately 1 acre of cleared and leveled land containing six well maintained log

and wood frame structures. There is no proposal to build new structures on the mining claims. Several outhouses are used to deal with human waste. Kitchen water is piped out to sump pits. In order for the Bradley family to continue the use and occupancy of the structures on their Federal mining claim, BLM must issue an occupancy authorization. The structures are within Sections 15 and 16, T. 26 N., R. 12 W, Seward Meridian.

Access can be achieved by landing an aircraft on the 3,000 foot airstrip adjoining the structures.

The proposed duration for the occupancy would be year-round.

- B. No Action Alternative:
The only alternative is the No Action Alternative. Under this alternative the Bureau would not authorize the proposed occupancy.

III. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

- A. Critical Elements:
There would be no impacts to the following critical elements: air quality, ACECs, environmental justice, farmlands, Floodplains, Native American Religious Concerns, T & E species, wetlands/riparian zones, wild and scenic rivers, subsistence, or wilderness.

1. Cultural:
The structures were constructed in the 1920's through 1930's for mining purposes. The structures have never been formally evaluated for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.
2. Subsistence:
No change in Federal Subsistence Management Program authority or implementation would occur from the Proposed Action. The Proposed Action will not significantly restrict subsistence uses, decrease the abundance of subsistence resources, alter the distribution of resources, or limit subsistence user access from currently existing conditions.

- B. Vegetation:
The vegetation consists mainly of alder, willow, fireweed and various grasses. All of the land adjacent to the cabins consists of tailings and settling ponds from past and present mining. Most of the surrounding drainages have been subject to placer mining in the past.

- C. Wildlife:
Wildlife in the area includes moose, black and brown bears, wolves, and various birds and small mammals.

IV. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

- A. Impacts of the Proposed Action:
There would be impacts to water quality from the production of grey water through kitchen and household activities. Grey water is usually disposed of through pipes leading to sump pits where it would migrate down, merge, and be quickly diluted by the local groundwater.

Minor amounts of solid household and human waste would be produced. Household waste would consist primarily of kitchen waste. Minor amounts of household hazardous waste would be generated, primarily from the use of household cleaners and solvents. The out-houses would be used to deal with human waste.

Brush in the immediate vicinity of the structures would be cleared and the existing structures maintained. Structures create an elevated need for wild-land fire protection for the area. The existence of structures usually results in a designation of a full suppression level of fire management in the local fire protection management plan.

The presence of food or improperly disposed garbage will occasionally attract bears. Every once in a while a bear must be shot if it stays around and becomes a potential hazard. Some of the local miners will harvest a moose in the fall for subsistence purposes. There is approximately 1 acre of lost habitat, principally impacting small mammals and birds, created by the occupancy. Additionally, the noise and activity associated with the occupancy will tend to cause many wildlife species to avoid the site and relocate to other areas. However, there is no shortage of similar habitat in the region for impacted species to relocate to.

- B. Impacts of the No Action Alternative:
The principal impact of not authorizing the requested mining claim occupancy is there would be no Bradley family occupancy on their Federal mining claims. Because of the remoteness of this location, mining is unlikely without a mining claim occupancy authorization. There is no local alternative housing or realistic opportunity to commute to the property. Additional impacts would be that brush in the immediate vicinity of the structures would not be cleared and the existing structures would not be maintained.

C. Cumulative Impacts:

There would be no cumulative impacts of the occupancy to local resources.

V. CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

A. List of Preparers:

Carl Persson	BLM Geologist (Certified Mineral Examiner #035)
Jeff Denton	BLM Subsistence Coordinator
Bruce Seppi	BLM Threatened & Endangered Species Coordinator
Donna Redding	BLM Archeologist
Dave Kelley	BLM 3809 Surface Management Coordinator